

Australia resulted to a large extent from the want of that direct telegraphic communication which so greatly facilitates commercial transactions. I will now give the House a little idea of the position in which that question was when I resigned the position of High Commissioner in London. The great conference that was held of the Australasian representatives and the representatives of the British Government meeting here with the representatives of Canada gave a great impetus to this project. After consideration of the subject that conference arrived at a practically unanimous resolution in favour of the question being taken up and pressed upon the consideration of Her Majesty's Government. Lord Jersey, who represented the Imperial Government at that conference attached very great importance to this project and dealt very ably with it in his report to Her Majesty's Government upon the conference itself. When the present Government came into power I made a very strong appeal under direction of the Government of Canada to the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain, the Colonial Minister, to take up this question of the Pacific Cable connecting Canada with Australasia, and that right hon. gentleman having given a great deal of attention and careful consideration to the subject was good enough to receive a deputation. On that occasion, I was accompanied to the Colonial Office by the representatives in London of all the Australasian colonies, including New Zealand, with the exception of the representatives of South Australia and West Australia. We never expected to have the active support of these provinces, for the reason that they had built a very long and expensive line of telegraphic communication across the country connecting with the Eastern Extension Company, and the carrying out of the project of cable communication on the Pacific from Vancouver to Australia would tend very much to take away the business upon which this line constructed by South Australia and West Australia depended for its maintenance. I may say that when on the occasion on which, under instructions of the Government of Canada and of all the Australian Governments, except the two I have mentioned, we waited upon the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain with a joint request that a commission should be appointed by Her Majesty's Government for the purpose of taking up the question as to whether it was desirable that this Pacific Cable should be established and in what form it was most likely to be successfully carried out, the Colonial Minister at once warmly entered into the subject, and, in response to our application agreed promptly to issue a Royal Commission to invite representatives from Canada and from Australia to meet in England for the purpose of conferring with Her Majesty's Government on that subject. And I may say—and it is a very important statement that I am about to make—that Mr.

Chamberlain, who is noted not only for his great ability, but for his thorough knowledge of financial questions, stated to the delegation or representatives from Canada and Australia that, having given to the subject the fullest and most careful consideration in his power, and, in the light of all the information that could be brought to bear upon it, he had arrived at the conclusion that the accomplishment of the Pacific Cable from Vancouver to Australia would not involve, practically, any financial responsibility. He reached this conclusion not only from the evidence that had been submitted by Sir Sandford Fleming, to which he had given careful attention, but from the stronger and more complete evidence afforded by the invitation for tenders by the Government of Canada at the request of the Ottawa conference. This invitation resulted in obtaining from one of the strongest firms of Great Britain, the India Rubber and Gutta Percha Cable Company and Works a tender for the construction and maintenance for three years of the cable. This not only established that the calculations that Sir Sandford Fleming had made—and very elaborate calculations they were—were sound but that the terms on which one of the strongest cable companies in Great Britain was prepared to carry out the work, was nearly a million less than Sir Sandford Fleming had estimated.

So that instead of having been too sanguine, instead of having overestimated the results of his labours, it was found by practical test that his figures were outside figures, and that he could undoubtedly have constructed it at a much lower rate than he had estimated. Not only that, but as I have said, the Colonial Minister himself declared that having gone into the subject with great care, he had arrived at the conclusion that this great work in which Her Majesty's Government were most deeply interested, could be carried out by the joint operation of Canada, Great Britain and Australasia, without practically involving any other material financial responsibility whatever. Now, Sir, that was an enormous point gained. A commission was appointed, and, as the House knows from the papers that have been laid upon the Table, no definite conclusion was arrived at. A change of Government occurred about that time, and an alteration was made in the commission, although I am glad to know that the present Government availed themselves of the invaluable services of Sir Sandford Fleming in this matter, as the previous Government had done, but with the result that while we all looked forward to this great Jubilee occasion as one on which we had every reason to believe this important work would be finally arranged, on the contrary, for some cause, to me unaccountable, the work was not proceeded with, but suffered a decided set-back. The hon. member for West Elgin (Mr. Casey)